



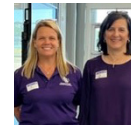
NELSON RUSCHE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

RUSCHE REVIEW

» HIGHLIGHTS



Sports business senior keeps her eye on the ball



Accounting faculty and student leaders recruit local students



COB students promote Hispanic heritage



Marketing alumna's real estate agency reflects family values

ARNOLD CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEDICATED

SFA regents, faculty, staff and students celebrated the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship, or ACE, with a ribbon cutting Jan. 29 on the third floor of the McGee Business Building.

ACE is named for Greg Arnold '87, CEO of TAC - The Arnold Companies, whose significant donation was used to establish the center.

"Greg Arnold is not a man to think small," said Dr. Steve Westbrook, SFA president-elect. "He thought large and asked us to continue to think in that way."

Officially launched in summer 2022, ACE will advance its mission through services provided to East Texas businesses by center staff, faculty members and SFA students under the direction of faculty members.

"This center is transformational," said Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the College of Business. "This was only a dream until the right person came along with the vision, generosity and energy to invest in it."

ACE also offers mentoring, scholarships and internships for students



Celebrating at the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship, or ACE, ribbon cutting are, front row, from left, Dr. Steve Westbrook, SFA president-elect; Ashley and Greg Arnold, ACE benefactors; Karen Gantt, SFA Board of Regents chair; Jennifer Wade Winston, board secretary; Brigette Carnes Henderson, regent; Paige Vadnais, student regent; and Robert Flores, regent. Back row, from left, are Dr. Tim Bisping, College of Business dean; David Alders, regent; Judy Larson Olson, regent; Nancy C. Windham, regent; and Lauren Rectenwald, regent. For more information, visit sfasu.edu/ace.

as well as support for SFA's Society for Entrepreneurial Advancement. In addition, ACE sponsors the Lumberjack Entrepreneurship Competition, a campuswide event inspired by the ABC TV show "Shark Tank" that is open to the public and scheduled for April 21.

Arnold said his wife, Ashley, and he wanted to establish ACE to provide students a greater chance to find business-building success.

"Students need to kick doors open. They can't wait for them to be opened," Arnold said. "They can dream about

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Greetings from the Rusche College of Business!

I hope 2023 is off to a great start for all our Rusche alumni and friends.

As we kick off the spring semester and a new year, I have never been more excited about everything in store for our college! You will see in this edition of the Rusche Review that we are moving forward with outstanding new initiatives that will be truly impactful for our students, faculty, staff and community!

It is also a time of transition for us in so many ways, and I am pleased to communicate to you that these transitions are bringing progress and positive change. With our new initiatives in the college, combined with the momentum of the university moving into The University of Texas System while conducting a presidential search, enthusiasm and optimism abound. I consider myself an optimist, but I have never been more optimistic about the future of our college than I am at this point in time. Stay tuned to news from SFA; good things are happening!

As we look ahead to the rest of 2023, I hope everyone has a happy and prosperous year. Thank you for your dedication to the College of Business. Our college and university are special, and your support makes them all the more so.

As always, axe 'em!

Sincerely,

Tim Bisping, Dean

the art of the possible — not just for the College of Business or center but for the entire university and East Texas community.”

ACE also contains the Small Business Resource Hub, which provides local small businesses with services including loan proposals, marketing, retailing, advertising, budgeting, business planning and personnel management. Larry Cain '99, former director of the Angelina College Small Business Development Center, was recently named SBRH director.

Another new entity, SFA Business and Community Services, assists local and regional businesses, nonprofits and government organizations with business-related activities.

“While helping these groups, students work on problems unique to East Texas and gain real-world

experience before starting their careers,” said Dr. Marcus Cox '90 and '96, BCS coordinator and associate professor of management.

As part of its goal to provide expert economic research, analysis and consulting services in the East Texas region and beyond, the College of Business also established the Center for Business and Economic Research.

“We want to become the go-to resource in the region for expert analysis and commentary on matters of economic policy and economic development,” said Dr. Mikhail Kouliavtsev, CBER director and chair of the Department of Economics and Finance.

Bisping said, “By establishing these four resources, the College of Business is developing partnerships that can help students, faculty and the community.”

■ PARKER GIVES COMMENCEMENT ADDRESSES

Emily Parker, a prominent tax attorney and SFA alumna, delivered the commencement address during the university's three graduation ceremonies Dec. 9 and 10.

With the exception of a short stint as acting chief counsel and deputy chief counsel for the IRS from 2002 to 2004, Parker spent her entire career at super firm Thompson & Knight LLP, now Holland & Knight. She was the first female lawyer hired by the firm and later became the firm's first female partner. She served as managing partner at the firm from 2012 to 2016 and retired in 2019.

A native of Henderson, Parker graduated from SFA with a bachelor's degree in economics and finance in 1970. She then graduated from Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law in 1973.

Currently a member of SMU law school's executive committee, Parker's past legal admissions when she was a star tax litigator in the oil and gas industry went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.



Emily Parker, SFA alumna and groundbreaking tax attorney

Parker created the Emily A. Parker Scholarship to benefit academically high-achieving students pursuing any major at SFA. She also supports Dallas Court Appointed Special Advocates, the Child Abuse Prevention Center, Easterseals North Texas and Texas Women's Foundation.

SPORTS BUSINESS SENIOR KEEPS HER EYE ON THE BALL

Elena Bleicher, SFA tennis player and sports business senior from Gries, France, has participated in three of the four Grand Slam tennis tournaments — the Australian, French and U.S. opens — not as a player but as a ball person.

“The fourth, Wimbledon, has strict age requirements and a practice of selecting ball kids from specific private schools, but I plan to somehow work that tournament in some way someday. It’s on my bucket list,” Bleicher said.

During the 2022 U.S. Open, her most recent ball crew stint, Bleicher worked Serena Williams’ emotional first and third round matches, the latter of which was Williams’ retirement match. She also was working the court when

Iga Świątek won the women’s final. But the longest match ever recorded at the U.S. Open — Carlos Alcaraz versus Jannik Sinner — made the biggest impression on Bleicher. It lasted 5 hours and 15 minutes.

“This match was unbelievable,” she said. “We finished at 3 a.m., and the ambiance was incredible.”

Bleicher, who recently cracked the power rankings leader board at No. 20 as part of the 2023 National Collegiate Sports Sales Championship, also studied the business side of the tournament. Even the ball crew, with nearly 300 ball persons, presents



Elena Bleicher at the U.S. Open

business challenges, from the selection process to the scheduling, budget, uniforms, and rules on and off the court.

Bleicher said she doesn’t have a favorite Grand Slam because “Every open is unique. You work with a different culture every time.”

Her ball crew experiences are helping Bleicher prepare for a career as a sports event organizer.

“Running a huge competition like the U.S. Open would be an amazing opportunity,” she said. “I made a lot of contacts during those three weeks who definitely could help me in my career.”

SMITH SAWMILL SERVICE JOINS GROWING LIST OF CORPORATE PARTNERS

The College of Business has partnered with Smith Sawmill Service to provide SFA students with a direct path to business careers in wood processing.

“We are thrilled to work with Smith Sawmill Service to better serve our students and our region,” said Dr. Jason Reese, associate dean of the College of Business. “It is a first-class organization that truly cares about the success of our students and the East Texas region.”

One of the largest suppliers and service providers of saws, cutting tools, filing room equipment and critical consumable products, Smith Sawmill Service has locations in Texas, Louisiana and North Carolina. It also is one of a growing number of corporations that the College of Business works with to help students explore their career options before graduation.

“We see a tremendous opportunity in our partnership with SFA’s College of Business,” said Dustin T. Norris, vice president of Smith Sawmill Service. “SFA has consistently produced leaders and creative thinkers that bring value to our organization, and I am proud to reinforce our commitment to higher education here in the piney woods of East Texas.”

These partnerships are a win-win for corporations and students, said Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the College of Business.

“Engaging with an excellent partner such as Smith Sawmill Service is a great example of how a quality corporate partner program works to the benefit of all,” he added. “I’m excited to see this partnership grow in the years to come.”

ACE HOSTS 'WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP' PANEL DISCUSSION

To mark National Women's Small Business Month in October, the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship, or ACE, sponsored "Women in Entrepreneurship," a panel discussion for students, faculty and staff featuring three local female business owners.

The panelists for the discussion were Wendy Buchanan, SFA alumna and owner of Buchanan Wealth Management in Nacogdoches; Sarah Atkinson, owner of Atkinson Candy Company in Lufkin; and Dr. Amy Mehaffey, owner of Small Town Socials boutique social media agency in Nacogdoches and lecturer of management and marketing.

After earning her Bachelor of Business Administration in finance in 1985 from SFA, Buchanan entered the male-dominated financial planning world as an assistant to two male brokers at Edward Jones. In her five years there, she learned everything she could. Then she took the General Securities Representative Qualification Examination, or Series 7 exam, and opened her own office.

"I wanted to prove to them that I could be as successful as they were," Buchanan said.

Her business averaged one new account every day for a year. Her male peers all referred to her as "their little broker girl," Buchanan said. But after four years building her business, she was ranked in the top 3% in the nation for the firm.

Buchanan advised students looking to start their own businesses to treat people fairly, and also to develop a plan and stick to it.

"There's nothing that you can't do," she said.

Atkinson was pursuing a dancing career on Broadway and working for a New York City public relations firm when she first discovered her entrepreneurial spirit.

As the fourth generation of the family who started Atkinson Candy Company, she initially said, "I'll never work in the family business." But she found herself calling her father with ideas to market the company. Eventually, her dad invited her to market the company herself.

Atkinson returned to Lufkin with the production knowledge she learned from both her dancing and public relations stints in New York City and put them into practice for Atkinson Candy Company. Now, she manages its day-to-day business.

"Don't throw away any experiences, hobbies or passions," Atkinson said. "You never know what will be useful."

Mehaffey's great-grandfather believed that by helping others achieve their dreams, he could achieve his, as well. Mehaffey's dad passed this advice on to her.

She's followed his guidance in her career, from working as a state 4-H specialist for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to serving as interim city planner and communications director for the City of Nacogdoches to teaching future managers and marketers at SFA.

Along the way, she developed relationships with community members who needed her help with social media, design, photography

PERFECT PITCHES

Members of SFA's newly created Society for Entrepreneurial Advancement spent the fall term listening to students from all majors and classifications pitch their business ideas. For the finals competition, one participant from each of SFA's six colleges will be chosen to record a pitch. These pitch videos will be shown at a home basketball game this spring and judged by crowd applause.

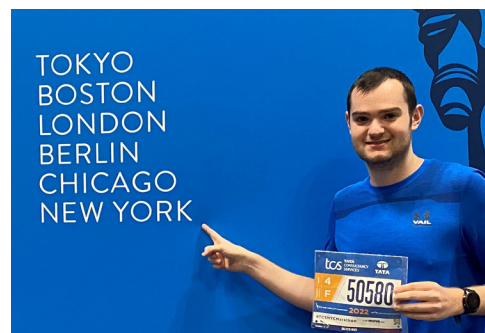
The Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship also will host the second annual Lumberjack Entrepreneurship Competition for all majors and both undergraduate and graduate students April 21. Last year's winner earned \$5,000. The public is invited to attend this event, which is based on the ABC TV show "Shark Tank." To learn more, visit sfasu.edu/ace.

and website development, so she established two businesses to address this work. In addition to clients, Mehaffey tries to help her employees, who all began working remotely before it was a common practice. In many cases, they had to leave in-person jobs because they had children.

"My favorite part of being an entrepreneur is the human aspect of it," Mehaffey said. "I get to help people — both clients and employees."



Representatives from more than a dozen Texas banks discussed careers in banking at November's Banking Exposition sponsored by the Chadwick Family Banking Program.



David Baker, who is working on his Bachelor of Business Administration in business communication and corporate education, competed in the New York City Marathon in November with 48,000 other runners. His time was 06:06:56.

ECONOMICS READING GROUP HOSTS AUTHOR

The Economics Reading Group hosted a virtual discussion with Dr. John A. List, author of “The Voltage Effect: How to Make Good Ideas Great and Great Ideas Scale,” in November.

List, the Kenneth C. Griffin Distinguished Service Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, also co-authored the 2013 international bestseller “The Why Axis: Hidden Motives and the Undiscovered Economics of Everyday Life.” He is known for his extensive use of field experiments in his microeconomic research.

“Each semester, ERG covers an important and accessible book related to economics,” said Dr. Ryan Phelps, ERG faculty advisor and associate professor of economics. “As our students found out this semester, economics touches on every topic in life that requires critical thinking. Economics is not all about money.”

“The Voltage Effect” explores how scaling good ideas can drive change in a variety of arenas, including schools, workplaces, communities and society at large.

“We offered John a sizable honorarium for his participation,” Phelps said. “John instead



Gentian Kojeli, political science junior from Tirana, Albania; Barret Williams, economics freshman from Wake Forest, North Carolina; and Alexander Ornelaz, sports business senior from McKinney, received scholarships totaling \$2,000 from the Economics Reading Group for their participation in a discussion with Dr. John A. List, author of “The Voltage Effect: How to Make Good Ideas Great and Great Ideas Scale.”

donated his time, which allowed us to give three scholarships to participants at his talk.”

One of the scholarship recipients, Alexander Ornelaz, is president of ERG and a sports business senior from McKinney.

“The opportunity to ask questions to a published author, let alone one as esteemed as Dr. List, was invaluable and greatly enriched my personal experience as president of ERG,” Ornelaz said.

ERG Vice President Gentian Kojeli, a

political science junior from Tirana, Albania, who also received a scholarship, said List’s “multifaceted, well-thought-out ideology, paired with experience with big corporations and legislators in Congress, made for invaluable lessons and life tips for college students.”

To view the video of List’s discussion and learn more about ERG’s spring reading selection, “An Economist Goes to the Game” by Paul Oyer, visit faculty.sfasu.edu/phelpsr.t.

TUITION REIMBURSEMENT WIN-WIN

At age 16, Nicholas Mobley of Tomball was the youngest employee ever hired by Mattress Firm. Now, the company is investing in Mobley’s general business degree from SFA.

“Mattress Firm strongly believes in the continuing education and development of our associates, and tuition reimbursement is one way to show our people that we care about their growth,” said Zahira Gonzalez ’07, an SFA alumna who was serving as Mattress Firm’s East Texas district manager when Mobley asked about tuition reimbursement. “By truly caring and investing in our people, it allows us to retain the most talented individuals like Nicholas.”

To take advantage of the tuition reimbursement program, Mobley, now a junior, had to move from a part-time role

to a full-time associate position called a sleep expert while attending SFA. This required him to take his classes online and drive to Mattress Firm stores in Lufkin, Longview and Tyler, as well as Shreveport/Bossier City, Louisiana. College of Business advisors are working with Mobley to make sure he stays on track for graduation.

“We’re aware that students come to us from different walks of life, and the availability of online degree programs is a priority,” said Laurel Bleil, an academic advisor in the college. “Our goal is to help design specialized paths that lead students to graduation while balancing their academics, work and personal life. Nicholas has taken advantage of our online Bachelor of Business Administration degree in general business and is proof that you



Nicholas Mobley

can be a successful student while serving as a full-time employee.”

Mobley also intends to earn a Master of Business Administration from SFA.

“I want to pursue my MBA to further my career,” he said. “I feel like with my experience and a master’s degree, the sky is the limit.”

ALUMNUS USES HIS FINANCE DEGREE TO PIVOT FROM BIG TO SMALL BUSINESSES

After graduating from Alto High School, Christopher Ranniger '22 spent a year at SFA before leaving school to start a family and a 20-year management career at Walmart. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"The pandemic forced me to reevaluate many things in my life, especially my career," he said. "I decided that I had one last shot to get my degree, so I went for it."

Ranniger was inspired to major in finance while dealing with his own personal finances. He especially enjoyed his commercial bank lending class with David Kaiser, director of the Chadwick Family Banking Program.

"Once I started to learn about budgeting, investing, interest rates, etc., I just could not stop," he said.

As Ranniger graduated and entered the job market in May 2022, a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation called Communities Unlimited started expanding into East Texas. Founded in 1976, CU has made over \$45 million in loans to small rural communities and small businesses in 24 states.

"The mission of CU aligned with what I was looking for as I changed careers," Ranniger said. "The idea that I could use my new degree to help small business owners get access to capital seemed like the right place to dive into the world of finance."



Christopher Ranniger '22

Ranniger began his new job about three weeks after graduation. One of his first tasks was opening a new CU office in Nacogdoches.

"Lack of access to resources and opportunities has limited the growth potential of the innovative and entrepreneurial people that live in rural places," he said. "CU is committed to eliminating those limitations."

Ranniger has three children, and his wife, Celia '20, is working as an administrative assistant in SFA's Department of English and Creative Writing while earning her Master of Arts in English. Ranniger is eyeing a master's degree at SFA, himself.

"I plan on going back to get my MBA sometime in 2023."



The College of Business social media interns hosted a Taco Tuesday booth in honor of National Hispanic Heritage Month. As students visited the booth and learned about Hispanic culture, they received a free taco.

NEW FACULTY MEMBERS

Dr. Charles Oberweiser
Assistant professor, Accounting

Hunter Throckmorton
Lecturer, Accounting

Dr. Suhyung Lee
Assistant professor, Business Communication and Legal Studies

Dr. Wenqing "Vienna" Gao
Assistant professor, Economics and Finance

Dr. Derek Walton
Assistant professor, Management and Marketing

Dr. Yang Xu
Assistant professor, Management and Marketing



The Schlieff School of Accountancy held an informational session in October for approximately 100 Nacogdoches High School students interested in the accounting profession. In addition to careers in accounting, presenters discussed SFA's accounting degrees, scholarships, internships and other opportunities. Presenters included, from left, Alicia Howatt, recruiter for Axley & Rode; Zachary Wilson, accounting senior from Crosby and president of the Beta Alpha Psi professional and honorary accounting fraternity; Dr. Kelly Noe, accounting professor and director of the Schlieff School of Accountancy; Marie Kelly, accounting lecturer; and Deborah Crenshaw, a teacher in the NHS Career and Technical Education program. "Student response was overwhelmingly positive, and we foresee continuing this partnership in the years to come," Kelly said.

FBLA COLLEGIATE EARNS NATIONAL HONORS

Three members of FBLA Collegiate, formerly Phi Beta Lambda, placed in competitions held during the Phi Beta Lambda National Leadership Conference in Chicago.

Preston Pennington-Sahs, an economics senior from Frisco, earned first place in the macroeconomics category; Martarosa Velazquez of Lufkin, who graduated in May with a Bachelor of Business Administration in marketing, earned seventh place in the marketing analysis and decision-making category; and Kristen Baker, a finance junior from Nacogdoches, earned 10th place in the marketing concepts category.

Based on the participants' objective test scores and presentation, judges determined the top 10 competitors in each category, some of which had up to 30 competitors who had advanced from their state-level competitions.

"I am extremely proud of our students as they continue to impress," said Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the College of Business. "Time and time again, SFA's business students perform at the highest levels on a national stage, and each new win is as exciting as the last."

Competing for the first time at the national level, Pennington-Sahs outscored all the other participants who took the exam for the macroeconomics category. He believes his success had more to do with his preparation than beginner's luck.

"A big part of winning my event was simply the professors here at SFA," Pennington-Sahs said. "Had it not been for the great professors who teach the courses relevant to my event, I doubt I would have won."

For her marketing analysis and decision-making challenge, Velazquez was given a case study and an objective test. The case study focused on a struggling business.

"I had to come up with a plan to help revive the company," Velazquez said. "This included identifying the business' strengths, weaknesses and potential within its market."

Because of challenges like these, Velazquez also thinks FBLA has given her an advantage as she searches for her post-graduation job.

Baker earned 10th place in marketing concepts due to her score on the comprehensive exam.

"I believe I placed because I had great professors for both my business



Three students in FBLA Collegiate, formerly Phi Beta Lambda, placed in competitions at the Phi Beta Lambda National Leadership Conference in Chicago. From left, Preston Pennington-Sahs, an economics senior from Frisco; Martarosa Velazquez of Lufkin, who graduated in May with a Bachelor of Business Administration in marketing; Kristen Baker, a finance junior from Nacogdoches; and Dr. Marice Jackson, assistant professor of business communication and legal studies as well as faculty advisor for FBLA Collegiate.

communications and marketing concepts classes at SFA," she said. "I also work full time in property management and was able to use my real-world career experience in marketing properties and communicating with residents in both of my events."



Senior banking majors Sophie Clakley and Chase Allen attended the Independent Bankers Association of Texas Annual Convention in Fort Worth. Over 850 bank executive officers, directors, regulators and vendors attended the conference to discuss current events, emerging trends, technology, and political and policy issues.



Members of the College of Business Executive Advisory Board and their respective mentees met for lunch at SFA's Culinary Café during the fall 2022 EAB meeting.

ALUMNA BUILDS REAL ESTATE AGENCY ON HARD WORK AND SOUTHERN ROOTS

Melanie Northcutt '06 has been making headlines across East Texas as the owner of Sugar Magnolia Properties, a boutique real estate agency in downtown Longview. In 2020, she was one of 150 citizens profiled in the @longviewTX150 book for Longview's 150th birthday, and, in 2021, she was named ETX View magazine's 40 Under 40 Most Influential Real Estate Agent in East Texas.

But life wasn't always so glamorous. After earning her marketing degree at SFA, Northcutt spent two years working at Enterprise Rent-A-Car in Nacogdoches.

"I always called it boot camp for anything I wanted to do after that. Washing cars in East Texas humidity while wearing pantyhose was just one example," Northcutt said. "But that job taught me so much about sales, relationships, work ethic, having a positive attitude through it all and perseverance. It also taught me how to run my own business."

After five years as training coordinator at Kilgore College Small Business Development Center, Northcutt got her real estate license, worked four years as a realtor in her hometown of Longview, and passed the Texas Real Estate Broker License Exam. She then opened Sugar Magnolia Properties in 2017.

"My goal was to have a business that reflected my East Texan and southern roots as well as my family's values, treated others by the Golden Rule, featured the highest trained agents, maintained quality over quantity of agents, and gave back to our community." Northcutt said. "Today, we have 11 agents who are exceptional



Melanie Northcutt '06

stewards of the community. They are ethical, hardworking and kind, and I am proud to call them my friends and team members."

To help find those team members and establish a "low-pressure way" for young people in the community to connect, Northcutt established Young Professionals of Longview in 2013. Now, with more than 200 members, the organization helps young people grow their businesses.

"People do business with those they know, like and trust, and it was a great way for me to earn that from my peers and develop my own sphere of influence and network as a young business owner."

DISCOVER BUSINESS IN COSTA RICA

If you're a non-business major at SFA or an incoming freshman regardless of major, you're eligible to take BUSI 4375: Discovering Business in Costa Rica, a study abroad trip organized by the College of Business.

From Aug. 8 through 14, you'll explore Costa Rican businesses including a cigar factory, pineapple farm and coffee plantation. The trip also features a chocolate-making tour and cooking class.

Email Dr. Ryan Phelps at phelpsr@sfasu.edu or Drew Thornley at thornleyam@sfasu.edu to learn more or reserve your spot by March 1.



"It's never too late to do the right thing," said Rick Lowry who graduated with a bachelor's degree in general business in August. More than 70 years old, Lowry, who now lives in Houston, returned to the College of Business to pursue his degree 46 years after leaving school to provide for his family. Read more in the [summer 2021 Rusche Review](#).

NEW GRADUATE CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE THIS FALL

The College of Business will offer two new graduate certificates beginning fall 2023: Business Analytics and Organizational Leadership.

Both 12-hour certificate programs feature selected courses from SFA's Master of Business Administration curriculum

that help you develop the analytical skills and leadership and communication skills you need to manage organizations successfully. If you earn both certificates, you're two-thirds of the way to an MBA.

The courses are taught face-to-face or via Zoom (synchronous) in the

evenings, with one course offered as an asynchronous online course. Because these certificates are offered through a hybrid approach, you can complete them no matter where you live.

To learn more, select "Graduate" at sfasu.edu/cob.